

NETWORK

➔ Newsletter for Greenpeace activists

March 2009



www.greenpeace.org.uk/active

INTERNATIONAL



Greenpeace ship the Arctic Sunrise arrives in the DRC's main timber export harbour.

DRC forests still under threat

Belinda Fletcher, forest campaign

In October, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) government announced the results of a three year review of the country's timber industry, cancelling many logging contracts as a result. Companies were then allowed to appeal against the decisions and in January, the government announced the final results.

The good news is that the government rejected 68 out of 87 appeals – a sign that it is starting to take a stand against the logging industry and protect the forest and the communities that rely on it. But it has gone against its own advisors who recommended that new long term logging areas be reduced to 4.4 million hectares. The government has approved 65 new contracts totalling over 9 million hectares – more than double the recommended area.

Worse still, some companies have been allowed to keep logging titles they obtained illegally after the moratorium on the issuing of new contracts was introduced in 2002. Swiss-based Danzer Group (the focus of our report revealing how companies in the DRC are evading tax) and Liechtenstein-based Nordsüdtimber Group both managed to keep hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest that they grabbed illegally in spite of the moratorium.

In cancelling these contracts, the DRC government has taken some positive action to protect the forest and now needs to develop alternatives to industrial logging. But as we go to print, there is new cause for concern. The Environment Minister has revealed plans to cut taxes and fees for logging companies and has even threatened to give some of the cancelled titles back to the logging companies, which could increase logging areas to 12 million hectares.

The government must resist pressure from international timber companies, uphold the moratorium and ensure that areas where contracts have been cancelled are prioritised for protection.



Above: The Drax 29, arrested for stopping a train from delivering coal to Drax power station last year, await trial this summer.
Below: Local campaigners demonstrate their opposition to the Ffos-y-Fran open cast coal mine near Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales

From strength to strength

Emma Gibson, climate campaign

As the decision on Kingsnorth looms, groups opposing new coal developments are continuing to spring up around the country.

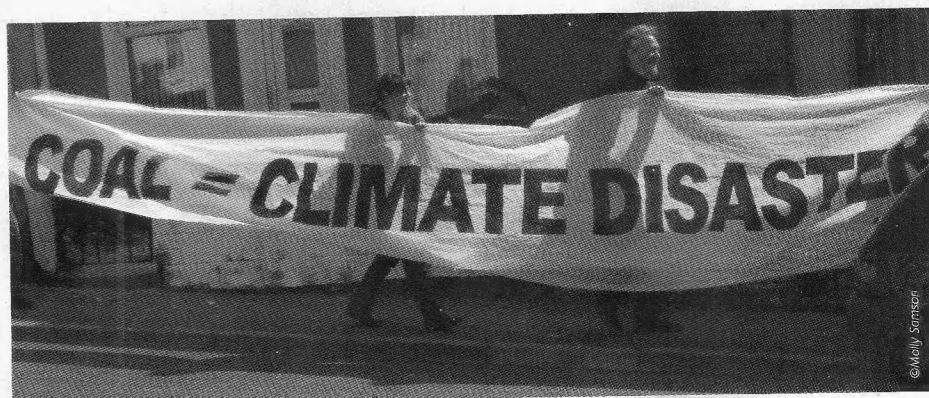
Yorkshire Against New Coal (YANC) have been especially active. In November, a YANC representative not only attended a cabinet meeting in Leeds, but directly and publicly challenged Gordon Brown on his government's coal policy.

In February, YANC released the results of their opinion survey showing that 71% of people in West Yorkshire want the Ferrybridge coal-fired power station to be replaced with renewable energy when it closes in 2015. That figure went up to 72% in Ed Miliband's constituency of Doncaster.

Meanwhile, just six months after Nottinghamshire Against New Coal (NANC) set up their group, they won their campaign to stop half a million tonnes of coal being recovered from a spoil heap at the closed down Langton colliery.

The North East is fast becoming a hotbed of anti-coal activity. Panic Stations have coordinated a broad coalition including local residents, church leaders and NGOs, to oppose the proposed new coal-fired power station at Blyth. The North East Opencast Coal Action Group are also in the process of relaunching.

As the Prime Minister prepares to make the fateful decision on Kingsnorth, we can only expect to see more activity from both local and national groups. With the government's reputation on tackling climate change in tatters over their decision on Heathrow, we will be working hard to convince Gordon Brown to make the right decision on Kingsnorth.



A collage of newspaper clippings, with the word "EMPLOYMENT!" prominently displayed in large, bold, black letters. Above it, the word "MARKETING" is visible in a smaller, stylized font. The background is a textured, greyish-white, suggesting a collage of various news articles and reports.

Major road
Philly
County Line
County

Williams River
South of end of runway

Marbleton community
at end of runway

Proposed third runway

Total area of Marple School

Total area of Squire community

Remains to be completed - located on 3 sides by airport

Remains to be completed on opposite side of airport

Above: The Airplot land is right at the centre of the area that BAA and the government want to develop.

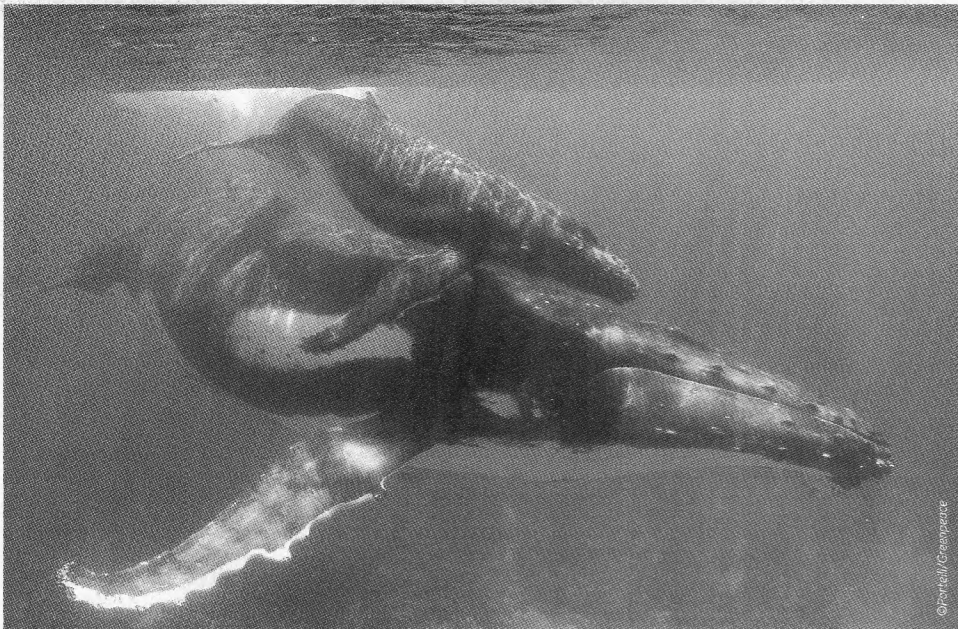
Vicky Wyatt, climate campaign

However, the Labour rebellion is the largest of its kind since the party came to power. Even over the highly emotive issue of Iraq, only 12 Labour MPs rebelled against the government. Clearly, Heathrow expansion is a critical political issue, and supporting it is going to come at a high cost for the government.

Networks will receive the second instalment of campaign materials in April. Meanwhile, you can visit the new Airplot website at www.airplot.org.uk to keep up to date.

A large black and white photograph of a snowy winter scene. Bare, snow-laden tree branches dominate the foreground and middle ground. In the background, a building with a dark roof and light-colored walls is partially visible. In the bottom right corner, there is a smaller, inset black and white portrait of a man with short hair, smiling and looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a light-colored collared shirt under a dark jacket.

Take a bit of a risk and trust your supporters and activists even more. Greenpeace volunteers are usually very reliable people, seriously committed to their objectives. Also, it helps to have members of networks working on their own activities between larger national campaigns.



The humpback whale's future continues to be threatened by pro-whaling countries.

World focus on whaling

Willie Mackenzie, oceans campaign

We are heading towards another International Whaling Commission meeting in June which will take place in Madeira, Portugal. This year is extremely important to the future of whaling as it will reveal the results of a whaling review by a working group of pro and anti-whaling countries. The group has been meeting regularly since last year with the intention of coming up with a suggested way forward to break the current deadlock between whalers and conservation minded countries like the UK.

The main concern is that, despite what has the potential to be a positive process, there is yet to be any evidence of commitment to compromise from the whalers. Not only have Japanese whaling fleets set sail again to kill whales in the Southern Ocean whale sanctuary, but they have also refused to be part of any agreement that would force them to give up their Antarctic hunt.

We have been continuing our work to change the Japanese government's pro-whaling stance. Last month, we opened a communications centre in Aomori – the main whaling area and the place where our two Japanese activists will stand trial for their part in exposing last year's scandal around smuggled whale meat. This new centre allows us to ensure that our work to stop whaling, as well as broader oceans issues like overfishing and marine reserves, is taken straight to the place where decisions are made and pressure generated. As Japanese culture makes it very difficult to take direct action, Greenpeace is in a fortunate position in that it is the only organisation able to work so closely to decision makers. However, the trial of the two activists Junichi Sato and Toru Suzuki has been delayed again, possibly until May or June. During this time, we are determined to keep the focus not only on these two brave activists, but also on the real issue of whaling. We will be working hard to ensure that commercial whaling is on trial – not just Junichi and Toru.

Meanwhile in Iceland, the outgoing Fisheries' Minister has taken advantage of the political and economic turmoil to announce a huge increase in Iceland's commercial whaling quota. His misleading promise that this will help the economy by creating jobs is based on a non-existent export market to Japan. Not only does this make no sense in its own right, it is also hugely damaging to Iceland's tourism and whale watching industries. Whaling will clearly be a key issue in the forthcoming elections in Iceland in the spring.

For updates on Greenpeace's work to bring an end to commercial whaling – check the Greenpeace website.

TALK TALK



Local residents from the village of Sipson supporting Airplot to stop Heathrow expansion.

Meet Greenpeace evening in Stirling, Friday 13 March, 7.30pm. Come along to find out more about Greenpeace and how you can get involved. To book a place, contact daveocarroll@hotmail.com.

Skillshares:

Nottingham, Saturday 28 March, 10.30am–5.30pm. All active supporters from the East Midlands region are welcome to come along and join in at the County Hall. Contact Jane Burd: greenpeacenotts@gmail.com by 16 March to book places.

Southampton, Saturday 28 March. A chance for Hampshire, Sussex, Dorset, Surrey, Wiltshire and Berkshire active supporters to share ideas, plans and successes and learn about Greenpeace's current work. Contact Dave at dshubble@yahoo.com for more details or to book a place.

ACTIVE SUPPORTER NETWORK OVERVIEW

Greenpeace's active supporter network is made up of network coordinators, local networks and individual active supporters. Today we have 105 network coordinators, 90 networks and 23,338 active supporters.

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